International Practice Development Journal

Online journal of FoNS in association with the IPDC and PcP-ICoP (ISSN 2046-9292)

INTRODUCTORY ARTICLE

Critical perspectives on person, care and ageing: unmasking their interconnections

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Published: 18th March 2020
https://doi.org/10.19043/ipdj.10Suppl.001

The need for theoretical and empirical investigation of perspectives on the concept of person in relation to care and ageing is highly relevant due to care policy approaches guided by ideas and priorities in relation to person-centred care, user participation, active ageing, quality in care, and patient rights, among other things. The political and professional priorities involved mean there is a need to explore the notions and interconnections of person, care and ageing because these have consequences for how care services are organised and delivered in real-life settings. Therefore, this special issue will critically examine how the relationship between person, care and ageing can be illuminated empirically and theoretically.

The concept of person

The concept of person is part of disciplinary trends in nursing as well as in other health and social care professions, evident in concepts such as person-centred practice, person-centred healthcare, person-centred medicine, person-centred communication, person-centred therapy and even person-centred music therapy. These are all concepts with an influence on how we think about care, but also how care is practiced in health and social services for older persons. Nevertheless, the literature addressing different forms of the concept of person has paid little attention to the 'roots' of the concept of person.

In 1938, the anthropologist Marcel Mauss wrote an essay on person, called *A category of the human mind: the notion of person, the notion of self*. The Latin word *persona* translates as 'mask'; 'persona equals mask' (Allen, 1985, p 28). Mauss argues that the notion of person connotes a role – 'a role played by the individual in sacred dramas' (1938/1985, p 12). He suggests the concept of person must be seen as part of social and cultural aspects, and he explores how it is embedded in institutions, social entities and beliefs of various kinds. That means that the concept of person is not to be understood as an innate or anatomical structure, but rather as part of wider cultural and social systems. All societies have a notion of being a person, in the sense of being aware of one's body and individuality in a spiritual and physical way. Nevertheless, such a 'person' entity is part of something outside of oneself; part of others and part of a social history (Mauss, 1938/1985, p 3). Accordingly, Mauss suggests that scholars should unmask the notions of person in relation to social entities. He also asks the questions: who is entitled to be a person? Will persons ageing be entitled to be persons, and in what way, defined by whom?

Similar questions are asked throughout this special issue: who is entitled to be seen and treated as persons in care home settings? What are the different ways of ageing in our societies, communities, and care institutions? Notions of person and care are shaped and reshaped in social settings, and therefore inherently anchored in cultural, social and historical entities. This is especially evident in the first article, 'Innovation in persons. An analysis of two prominent academic tales', in which Frode F. Jacobsen looks into the concept of person in relation to the political value innovation has had in care services for older persons. The article shows how it is possible to conceptualise and unmask the older person in a white paper's narrative when linked to innovation. By drawing on Foucault's historical analysis and linking innovation to development of human capital, innovation may literally come to mean innovation in persons. Jacobsen claims there is scant critical reflection on the concept of innovation in policy papers, and that its usage mostly implies positive connotations with regard to benefits for health and older care services. However, in a manner typical of Foucault, Jacobsen hints at a darker side of innovation with less-beneficial implications for older persons and their carers.

Fundamentals of care

In this issue, care is presented and understood in different ways depending on the context of inquiry. However, we argue that care is the natural and ontological mode of being human, independent of context of inquiry. Care underlies human existence and touches every aspect of life. As a concept, care originates from the latin word *carus*, which means neighbourly love and mercy (Eriksson, 1987). Neighbourly love and mercy lead into situations of action, into practical acts that benefit the other, in which the utmost goal is to safeguard dignity. Care is thus normative and gives a justification for ethics, as well as it calls for a communion. Being in a caring communion means acceptance of the ethical responsibility that is always implicit in the other person's call upon us. Humans are fundamentally interdependent (Martinsen, 2006), and for that reason, care demands an involvement in others' growth and development as unique and individual persons. Accordingly, care is a process of humanisation that involves helping another person become a complete and free human being of body, soul and spirit. Through this process, we confirm our own humanity. Inspired by the Danish philosopher K. E. Løgstrup, the Norwegian nurse and philosopher Kari Martinsen argues that care is carried out by precultural and anonymous life utterances such as vulnerability, love and trust. These are fundamental conditions that we cannot easily ignore in caring. There is fundamentally an appeal to take care of each other; to protect, and to promote life (Martinsen, 2006). Several of the articles in this issue, for example the contribution from Dahl and Eriksen, illuminate the fundamentals of care. However, the articles by Ursin and by Sandvoll and colleagues, when focusing on informal care, creativity, and the involvement of a person's local network, also underline the prevalence of care as a fundamental human condition. These latter activities have the character of natural care – that is, tending, playing and learning, in which the communion between humans as equals is emphasised (Eriksson, 1987). Natural care serves as the basic substance for professional care, with the aim of providing meaning to each other as fellow human beings through reciprocal giving and receiving of love. Alongside its status as a fundamental and ontological mode of being a person dependent on and interconnected to other persons, care is also part of cultural and societal practices. Throughout history, women have been socialised as 'natural' caregivers, expected to take care of their loved ones, but the form this care takes varies between societal and cultural settings. For instance, the article by Munkejord and colleagues stresses how care is highly gendered and cultural, even though spontaneous care utterances are described as being fundamentally human. Accordingly, that article serves as a good example of how the concept of care can be perceived as a universal entity as well as a cultural and social entity. The way this special issue addresses the concept of care may provide us with a deeper understanding of why and how to care for another human being.

Ageing and citizenship

While the concepts of person and care, as elaborated above, at least partly acknowledge the larger structural and societal aspects that facilitate and hinder care for older persons, there has been a growing influence in ageing studies of the concept of citizenship (Gilleard and Higgs, 2014). With its roots stemming from social science and political theory, citizenship provides a lens to look at ageing and old age from a political perspective, emphasising issues of ageism, participation and social exclusion.

Of particular interest for the focus of this issue is how the concept of citizenship has been applied in dementia studies to provide perspectives that can criticise, supplement and advance the tradition of personhood in relation to variants of person-centred care (Bartlett and O´Conner, 2007; 2010). One of the main advantages of citizenship in this context is that it is a political concept that 'recognises the person with dementia as an active agent with rights, history and competencies' (Bartlett and O´Conner, 2010, p 39). While an exclusive focus on persons, personhood and caring risks not acknowledging the structural, social and historical factors that might hinder participation in society, citizenship provides a framework that can analyse and propose solutions for active engagement of marginalised groups,such as persons with dementia. However, researchers in the field of citizenship and dementia acknowledge that implementing the concept in dementia practice and research is challenging because of the declining cognitive abilities that make it difficult for persons living with dementia to exercise their rights (Bartlett and O´Conner, 2007). It therefore becomes crucial to organise, facilitate and support possibilities for participation, and researchers have developed several lenses that can illuminate how persons with dementia might express and perform their citizenship, for instance through narrative citizenship (Baldwin and Group, 2008), everyday citizenship (Nedlund et al., 2019) and relational citizenship (Kontos et al., 2017). Narrative citizenship stresses the need to develop competence in understanding and facilitating agency through various narrative discourses and practices in dementia, while everyday citizenship investigates how citizenship and participation is linked to the routine practices of everyday life for persons with dementia. Pia Kontos and colleagues (2017) developed the model of relational citizenship, and in their article in this issue, Kontos, Grigorovich and Colobong further develop our understanding of relational citizenship by an analysis of the practice of elder-clowning in long-term dementia care. The analysis reveals how creativity in dementia can be truly co-creative, embodied and relational and that it must be 'supported through organisational practices and sociopolitical institutions', as well as through the 'embodied intentionality of all involved'. As such, the article shows the necessary connections between person, care and citizenship in elderly care.

Summing up

This special issue will, as Marcel Mauss did decades ago, unmask and critically examine the philosophical, theoretical and empirical ways in which the concept of person can be illuminated and outlined. The contributions illuminate, in one way or another, the interconnection between two or more of the concepts of person, care and ageing, from their fundamentals to how they are interwoven in societal aspects of citizenship in elderly care.

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